

Michael F. Easley
Governor



State of North Carolina
Office of the Governor

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STATEMENT FROM GOV. EASLEY REGARDING PLANT EXPLOSION IN KINSTON

RALEIGH – Gov. Mike Easley has been notified of an earlier explosion and fire at West Pharmaceuticals in Kinston. Currently, the emergency response is being handled at the local level by the Lenoir County Sheriff's Department.

The North Carolina National Guard has provided two personnel, two Humvees, one tent for use at the command post, a light set, a three kilowatt generator, and four combat lifesaver kits. Combat lifesaver kits are very large first aid kits with everything one would need in a battlefield situation. In addition, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Division of Air Quality has sent a staff person to monitor the air pollution being caused by smoke from the fire.

At this point, there are two confirmed fatalities and six people missing. Five people have been sent to the UNC Burn Center in Chapel Hill, 12 people are being treated at the local hospital, and six people are being treated at Pitt Memorial Hospital in Greenville.

"We are monitoring this tragic situation in Kinston," said Easley. "And the State is providing assistance to the local response teams as needed. Tonight, our primary concern is for the health and safety of the workers at the plant and nearby residents.

"We are also coordinating efforts with federal officials. Representatives from the US Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board and the US Environmental Protection Agency will be sent to the site tomorrow.

I know that I speak for all North Carolinians when I say that our thoughts and prayers are with all the victims and their families at this time."

Easley plans to travel to the site tomorrow. *[Details of his visit will be available in the morning.]*

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